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TRIP REPORT ON HELSINKI AND ESTONIA

1 - 4 JUNE, 1990

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- press conference in Helsinki

I. MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION

Senator Dennis DeConcini, Chairman of the Helsinki Commission
Mrs. Susan DeConcini

Mr. Samuel Wise, Staff Director, Helsinki Commission
Ms. Jane Fisher, Deputy Staff Director, Helsinki Commission
Ms. Ann Banchoff, Staff Member, Helsinki Commission
Mr. Stephen Goldfein, Senate Armed Services Liaison

II. OVERVIEW: THE CONTEXT OF THE VISIT

As in Lithuania and Latvia, politics in Estonia revolves around efforts to restore the independence lost when Soviet troops occupied the country in 1940. The widespread support among Estonians for full independence has become increasingly evident: by the time of the March 18, 1990 elections to the Estonian Supreme Soviet, virtually all the Estonian political organizations that arose over the last two years openly favored Estonian independence.

This reflects a political dynamic in which the rise of an organized opposition movement launched an "action-reaction" chain characterized by the progressive radicalization of all the socio-political groups involved. The initial spark was supplied by the growing discontent in Estonia and the greater possibilities for organized political activity, which led to the formation of the **Estonian Popular Front** in mid-1988. The Popular Front's advocacy of greater autonomy from Moscow and the free expression of Estonian nationalism won it wide backing among Estonians and recognition as the first popular front in the USSR.

The rise of the Popular Front evoked organized responses on both sides of the political spectrum. At one end were **Interfront** and the **Joint Council of Labor Collectives**, whose largely Russian constituents feared for their status in the new atmosphere of heightened Estonian national feeling. At the other end were more radical, pro-independence Estonian movements, which considered the Popular Front's initial program of greater autonomy from Moscow as too moderate. These forces eventually formed parties which rejected the legitimacy of Soviet institutions, including the Supreme Soviet, and which propagated the idea of forming an alternative forum based on citizenship in the interwar Estonian Republic. On March 11-12, delegates elected by "Citizens Committees" convened the **Congress of Estonia** as an alternative to the Estonian Supreme Soviet (recently renamed the **Estonian Supreme Council**).

A major rift continues to divide the leaders of the Estonian Popular Front from the organizers of the Congress of Estonia. Many Estonians view these conflicts as an unhealthy waste of energy that should be used against the common Soviet enemy, but reconciliation efforts have not succeeded so far.

The growing strength of pro-independence sentiment eventually forced the Popular Front to modify its own position in favor of independence, as well as rethink its initially negative position towards the Congress of Estonia. These pressures also created deep fissures in the **Estonian Communist Party**. Like the surrounding society, it tended to divide along national lines: Estonian Party members have generally backed "independence," though they differ about its meaning, while Russian Party members have generally favored Estonia's remaining within the Soviet Union.

Given Moscow's unyielding response to Lithuania's March 11 declaration of independence, Estonia took a different path. Instead of proclaiming an immediate restoration of independence, on March 30 Estonia launched a transition period of indeterminate length that will eventually lead to independence. Despite this moderation, Moscow had, until late May, rejected Estonia's declaration as unconstitutional and has threatened to introduce direct presidential rule.

Senator DeConcini first applied to go to Estonia in November 1988 and again planned to go during the March 1990 Supreme Soviet elections. Both times, he was denied entry permission by Soviet authorities. In May, Senator DeConcini was invited by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to attend the inauguration of the Estonian-American Chamber of Commerce in the capital city of Tallinn. In travelling to Estonia, Senator DeConcini also sought to gain a more complete understanding of the Baltic drive for independence and the prospects for bilateral relations with Estonia as well as the neighboring states of Latvia and Lithuania.

The following is a chronology detailing events in Estonia leading up to the time of Senator DeConcini's visit.

III. RECENT EVENTS IN ESTONIA
MARCH - MAY, 1990

March 11-12

First convening of the **Congress of Estonia**

March 18

Elections to the **Estonian Supreme Soviet**

March 28

Committee of Estonia (headed by Tunne Kelam) voted to turn over its authority temporarily to the new Estonian Supreme Soviet; the Supreme Soviet would then have the Congress of Estonia's support in declaring the start of a transition period for the reinstatement of the independent Republic of Estonia.

March 30

The newly elected Supreme Soviet passes 2 resolutions:

1. A declaration of the continued de jure existence of the Republic of Estonia, emphasizing the illegal Soviet annexation and occupation of Estonia and announcing the beginning of a period of transition to full independence. The decree provides, on the basis of legislation of the USSR and the Estonian SSR, for the continuation of relations between Estonia and the USSR during the proclaimed transitional period.
2. A pledge of cooperation with the Congress of Estonia.

The Supreme Soviet also issues a declaration of support for the Republic of Lithuania, stressing that the problem is not internal to the USSR, but an international issue. Calls for immediate negotiations with Moscow.

April 3

Soviet President Gorbachev phones Estonian President Ruutel to demand that the Estonian Supreme Soviet rescind the March 30 declaration suspending Soviet authority on Estonian territory. If it was not done, Gorbachev warned, he would be compelled to impose the "same regime in Estonia as in Lithuania."

April 11

Estonian Supreme Soviet approves a law abolishing criminal penalties for Estonians who refuse to serve in the Soviet Army. Also grants amnesty to those persecuted under those articles of the criminal code now eliminated.

April 19

Gorbachev and Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov meet with Estonian President Ruutel, Prime Minister Šavisaar, and academician Endel Lippmaa to discuss Estonian independence. Gorbachev demands that the Estonian Supreme Soviet rescind its March 30 declaration of transition to full independence and secede only according to USSR's new law on secession or he could be forced to impose direct presidential rule. Also warns on trouble with non-Estonians, referring to a letter from Interfront's Yarovoi calling on Gorbachev to impose direct presidential rule. Gorbachev, in a tactical change, also reportedly offered Estonia "special status" in a "confederative" Soviet Union.

April 26

Estonian Government spokesman says that Estonia will not comply with Moscow's orders to halt shipments of consumer and other goods to Lithuania.

May 8

The Estonian Supreme Soviet passes a law ridding Estonia of Soviet state symbolism. Renamed the **Republic of Estonia**, the state reclaims its own flag, coat of arms and hymn. The Supreme Soviet also adopts certain paragraphs of the old constitution.

May 14

Gorbachev says that the March 30 declaration is "invalid from the moment of its adoption...Estonia acted without consulting the people of the republic, and ignoring the economic, political, cultural and legal relations" with the Soviet Union.

May 15

An estimated 2,000-4,000 demonstrators storm the Estonian Supreme Council building grounds, occupy the courtyard, throw stones and overturn a truck. Demonstrators demand the resignation of President Ruutel, the repeal of the March 30 independence declaration and May 12 Baltic Unity Agreement, and an immediate referendum on the question of Estonian statehood. Prime Minister Savisaar made three appeals on the radio for help against the "attempted putsch." Foreign Minister Leri said that some 15,000-20,000 responded to the call, rushing to the government building and forming a channel through which the demonstrators could leave. No one was injured.

May 16

The Estonian Government announces a temporary ban on political strikes in the republic and on the activities of the anti-independence group, the **Joint Council of Labor Collectives.**

May 17

The Estonian Supreme Soviet adopts a law "On the Fundamentals of a Provisional System of Government for Estonia," directing all Estonian state, juridical and prosecutorial organs to end their subordination to their respective USSR organs and only follow laws adopted by Estonian authorities.

Some 3,500 volunteers sign up for an unarmed "home guard" to protect key government buildings and communications networks (a response to non-Estonian actions of May 15).

In addition to asking prosecutors to protest immediately against all local laws and decisions that contradict the USSR Constitution, the USSR procuracy reportedly orders prosecutors in Estonia and Latvia to strictly supervise the observance of the Soviet Constitution and laws, as well as to defend the rights of citizens and labor collectives there. The USSR procuracy states, moreover, that it would "firmly put a halt" to any actions that infringe on the territorial integrity of the USSR.

May 18

Report that an emergency Trade Ministry Collegium session was held to address panic buying by Estonian residents who fear an economic blockade. The session was forced to adopt a decision to transfer sales of basic foodstuffs to a coupon system.

May 19

Gorbachev decrees that Estonia's May 17 law on provisional rule is illegal because it was passed without preliminary consultations with central Soviet authorities.

May 21

The Russian Strike Committee claims that their May 15 demands were not met, and workers walkout at more than 20 enterprises. A spokesman says the group wants Mikhail Gorbachev "to introduce direct presidential rule and annul decisions taken by our government. Otherwise there is a danger of civil war."

The Estonian Government says that only a few workplaces have been affected and there has been no serious disruption.

The Estonian Supreme Soviet passes a law banning political parties from the police, judiciary and security services. Also votes 57 to 20 against even considering the recent decree from Gorbachev (declaring the March 30 independence declaration invalid).

May 23

Anti-independence strike leaders in Estonia call off their three-day-old strikes after receiving an appeal from Gorbachev to do so. Gorbachev reportedly sent a message to United Council of Work Collectives leader Vladimir Yarovoi asking that the strikes be suspended "in view of the complicated political and economic situation."

May 25

At the second **Congress of Estonia**, Chairman Tunne Kelam complains that after two and a half months of seeking cooperation with the Supreme Council, the Committee of Estonia continues "to be ignored" and be given only an observer role during the transitional period to independence. Prime Minister Savisaar urges unity, saying that the Congress should not challenge the Supreme Council's authority by pressing for its own legislative powers. Despite Savisaar's remarks, the Congress passes a resolution making it the highest organ of state power in Estonia.

May 26

A group of 172 non-Estonian deputies elected on the local, republic and all-Union levels, establishes the **Inter-regional Soviet of People's Deputies and Workers of the USSR** and votes not to abide by laws passed by the Estonian Supreme Council, but rather obey only Moscow.

May 27

At its second congress, the Estonian Popular Front passes a resolution declaring the Republic of Estonia's Supreme Council to be the highest authority in Estonia.

May 28

Russian-speaking groups in Estonia begin picketing in Tallinn in support of Estonian independence, declaring this to be "Democratic Russian-speakers Solidarity Week with the independence aspirations of the Estonian people."

IV. SUMMARY OF MAJOR BALTIC CONCERNS EXPRESSED TO CODEL

o The West ought to treat the Baltic situation as a case of foreign "occupation" and the restoration of independent states, rather than as questions of "national self-determination" or "human rights."

o The majority of the populations of the Baltic states support the restoration of Baltic independence and have entrusted freely elected parliaments to enact their will. Bilateral negotiations must take place with the Soviet Government in order to rectify the reality of the 50-year Soviet occupation. These negotiations must be between equal governments, in the Estonian case based on the 1920 Estonian-Russian Peace Treaty, and they must be accompanied by international guarantees of Baltic independence.

o The West ought to insist on Baltic participation in "Helsinki-II," making it clear that the restoration of Baltic independence, like the reunification of Germany, is linked to the final settlement of World War II. Several Estonian officials expressed strong intent to push through a membership petition at the Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE. Furthermore, they plan to submit a formal request for membership to the Paris "Helsinki-II" summit.

o The West ought not see the Baltic independence drive as a challenge to perestroika, nor as a threat to Gorbachev. On the contrary, the Baltic independence movement is a natural result of perestroika that can, if successful, strengthen the democratic elements inside the Soviet Union itself. The greatest fear among Balts is that the West might turn a blind eye to Soviet mistreatment of the Baltic situation out of a mistaken sense that Baltic independence must be sacrificed for the greater good of reform in the USSR and East-West relations.

o Boris Yeltsin's recent election to the presidency of the Russian Republic is pivotal in the Baltic independence. Yeltsin plans to develop bilateral ties with each of the Baltic governments, bypassing the central Soviet Government and forcing Gorbachev to reckon with the Baltic resolve.

V. MEETINGS

HELSINKI

Thursday, May 31 1990

On arrival in Helsinki, U.S. Ambassador **John G. Weinmann** hosted a dinner for the delegation and prominent Finnish citizens. Following the meal, Senator DeConcini and Ambassador Weinmann led a discussion on the Baltic states and CSCE. Following are some of the main points of the discussion.

Ambassador Weinman described U.S. sympathy for the Baltic states as part of a natural instinct to support the "underdog," and tied it to the U.S. penchant for ensuring respect for human rights. The issue, however, poses delicate questions for the West. Rhetoric has done little to change the situation in Lithuania, where a Soviet-imposed economic blockade has drastically reduced vital supplies. Weinman stressed the need to activate pressure points and to keep information flowing.

Senator DeConcini asserted that the U.S. must continue to press for change, adding that Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene, in recent testimony before the Helsinki Commission, made it clear that any and all support is vital to the cause of Baltic freedom.

Jutta Zilliacus, Chair of the Estonian Society and former Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, expressed her support for the Bush Administration's approach to the Baltic issue, which closely resembles that of the Finnish Government. Negotiations between the Soviet and Baltic governments are of the utmost importance, but Mrs. Zilliacus believes that too much pressure would be dangerous. She sees a positive evolution of opinion among the non-Balts living in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, but notes the importance of convincing these minorities that independence won't hurt them.

Senator DeConcini expressed an understanding of the delicate situation, especially of Soviet concerns over losing the Baltic military "buffer zone." But he maintained that the presence of Soviet military troops, as well as all other aspects of the Soviet-Baltic relationships, must be freely negotiated by both sides.

Pentti Sadeniemi, Deputy Foreign Editor of the Helsingin Sanomat and former Moscow correspondent, maintained that the West "cannot know what is best for the Balts," and should not "go overboard" on this issue. At the same time, he expressed his displeasure with the pressure in the media to "go the Swedish way."[1]

Ingvar Melin, Vice Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, expressed appreciation for the importance the U.S. has always attached to human rights, and sees a hopeful future for CSCE. He also repeated an invitation made to Senator DeConcini at an earlier date for developing an exchange between the U.S. Congress and the Finnish Parliament.

Asked what he expected from the Bush-Gorbachev summit that just had just begun in Washington, Senator DeConcini said that, although he doesn't expect any major concrete developments or changes, any meeting is positive and talks and human contacts are vital to good international relations.

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[1] The Swedes are the only West European government to recognize the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic states

ESTONIA

Friday, June 1 1990

The delegation travelled by ferry to Tallinn, where they were greeted by Peeter Tammoja, President of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the official host of the group.

The first meeting in Estonia was with **Ulo Nugis**, speaker of the Estonian Supreme Council and leader of the Estonian Union of Working Collectives. Mr. Nugis was also elected to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies and the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Chairman DeConcini opened the discussion by outlining the Commission's ongoing interest in, and support for, Baltic self-determination and the democratic goals of the Baltic independence movements.

Mr. Nugis stated that the Estonian drive for independence is proceeding pretty much as he had envisioned. He remarked that the Baltic question is now discussed as the "Lithuanian problem," but the Estonian and Latvian positions are not much different. On March 11, Lithuania declared the end of a long process ("We are independent and you must accept us as such") and now must consider going back to the beginning for practical reasons. Estonia, on the other hand, declared on March 30 that it was "starting to restore independence," and that it can no longer be referred to as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic -- only as the Republic of Estonia, a state now occupied that is seeking to restore its independence. Latvia's May 4 declaration was essentially the same. As Lithuania had already frozen all legislation passed after March 11, the situations of the three states do not differ.

Gorbachev and the "Yeltsin card"

At first, Nugis said, Balts counted on Gorbachev to "come around" and engage in negotiations, although they always have doubted his ability to accept the ultimate goal of complete independence for the Baltic states. It has become clear, however, that Gorbachev's position is too dependent on the existing Soviet power structure and that his main concern at this point is staying in power. As his position is not very stable, he is afraid to "let the Baltic states go."

Not willing to cancel their expressed desire to become independent, Baltic leaders are now pinning their hopes on Boris Yeltsin, the newly elected President of the Russian Republic. Contacts have already been made in an effort to establish strong bilateral economic ties between the RSFSR and each of the Baltic states.

Nugis doubts Yeltsin's courage in changing the policies of the RSFSR, but is certain of his intent to reform economic ties among republics. This alone helps against a prospective blockade against Estonia and may bode well for Lithuania. On the issue of independence, Nugis knows that Yeltsin is concerned over the fate of Russians in the Baltic states and thinks that Yeltsin will advise against hurrying and suggest an interim stage of confederation, but as Nugis phrased it, "We have already passed those stages." The Speaker expects a Gorbachev-Yeltsin face-off soon. Gorbachev will have to take measures against Yeltsin if he wants him to stop negotiating with the Baltic governments.

Ethnic Tensions

Mr. Nugis said that in the current situation, the ethnic question is most difficult; if ethnic tensions could somehow be resolved, all other issues could easily be negotiated. Anti-independence forces are attempting to preserve the old empire and fear retribution of the acts committed by Russians against Balts after the war. But a growing number of non-Estonians (now 26% of the non-Estonian population of approximately 600,000) fully support Estonian independence from the USSR and only 14% are entirely against the idea. This last group comprises mostly top Communist Party leaders, directors of big all-Union enterprises and the military.

Expectations for the Future

Mr. Nugis does not expect Soviet recognition of de facto Baltic independence very soon, but does hope that by the end of this year, the central government will recognize that Estonia never legally entered the USSR. [He pointed out that it took some time for Gorbachev to acknowledge the existence of the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and for the USSR Congress to condemn them as illegal. "The truth is coming out."] Even if this happens, many will fear the crumbling of the Soviet Union; the fate of Russian citizens and military interests will remain the most prominent concerns. While acknowledging the need to negotiate Soviet troop presence, Mr. Nugis asserted that Estonia itself wants to be neutral, not part of any military bloc.

The Role of the West

Senator DeConcini asked about the role of the West, to which Mr. Nugis responded that world opinion is at least as important to the Balts as the declarations of foreign governments. He understands that the politics of superpowers has kept western governments from openly supporting Baltic independence and doesn't want to place blame. All the same, he doesn't understand the reluctance to acknowledge that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are occupied countries. He pointed out that World War II ended 45 years ago and, with the sole exception of the Baltic states, all other countries occupied during the war have regained their independent statehood. The Speaker also expressed his hope that Baltic states will be welcomed as observers at Helsinki II.

The Senator also asked for Nugis' opinion on the Moynihan initiative to send the question of Lithuanian self-determination to the World Court, and on what he would like to see the U.S. do. Mr. Nugis responded that there is no question on the right to self-determination; indeed the Baltic question is not one of human rights at all, but of ending an occupation. Mr. Nugis made clear that the influence of the United States is considerable, and the U.S. is mistaken in treating this as a human rights issue. In concrete terms, the U.S. should recognize the independent Republic of Lithuania, in which case Estonia and Latvia would immediately declare their independence and expect recognition also.

Senator DeConcini closed the meeting by assuring the Speaker that there is much support for ending the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states. The delicate situation with Gorbachev has kept the U.S. from recognizing Lithuania's independence, but he and other members in Congress will continue to urge the Administration towards this end.

In the evening, the delegation was hosted for dinner by representatives of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Estonian Union of Working Collectives. Hosts included **Indrek Toome**, former Prime Minister and a leader of "Free Estonia," **Ulo Nugis** (see above), and **Endel Lippmaa** (see below).

In remarks following the dinner, Senator DeConcini praised the Estonian effort to enhance the quality of life in the republic by developing a market system that rewards productivity, capability, skill and fine minds. The objective in developing such a system is to provide economic choice for each individual. The Helsinki Commission, Chairman DeConcini pointed out, deals with human rights, and among these are economic rights. "We greatly admire the governments of the Baltic states for their willingness to take a political risk to bring about positive change for the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania...and we respect the pursuit of what Indrek Toome has termed the Baltic 'de-connection' from the Soviet Union."

Saturday, June 2 1990

Outside the city

The delegation began the day with a visit to the **Tallinn Poultry Farm**, the second largest poultry farm "in the USSR." Some 30 miles long, the Estonian State-owned farm has its own stores, medical clinic, school, and cultural center for its approximately 1,500 employees. The farm provides close to 5 million chickens and another 5 million eggs to the USSR each year, but most of the farm's products remain in Estonia. Technology for the farms operations comes from Holland, West Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Unlike in Russia, farmers' wages are higher than those in the industrial sector, and this particular farm is relatively wealthy. For the last couple of years, the farm has operated on an incentive-based system, but the confiscatory Soviet tax system keeps anyone from making much profit. There are now plans to privatize the farm.

On the way back to Tallinn, the delegation drove by a phosphate factory run by Russians and was told that after a long struggle the factory had been shut down by the Estonian Government for heavily polluting the air and water. The group also stopped briefly at the Pirita Sports complex where the sailing regattas took place during the 1980 Summer Olympics (which the U.S. boycotted).

Back in Tallinn, the delegation met with members of the Union of Artists after viewing some clearly uncensored artwork in a small gallery.

The Estonian Union of Artists has long been the freest "in the USSR," having escaped some time ago the limits of total Communist Party control. Its approximately 650 members represent both fine and applied arts. Their work is now sold through the Union and the Ministry of Culture, but private sales are gaining importance. Even so, the artist often receives only about 35% of the sale as the state charges 47% tax on private sales overseas and the Union gets from 10-25%). Consequently, most artists have other jobs as well.

Estonian artists have had good contacts and exchanges with West Germany, Sweden and Finland and have also has successful exhibits in the U.S. including the "International Images" show in Pittsburgh.

During the course of discussion, the artists welcomed the changes taking place in Estonia, for independent statehood will mean more control and a completely new set of laws. Some added, however, that the entrance into a market economy had bred some insecurity among artists. The prospect of a tax law is of particular concern, as the financing system of the Union is currently dependent on the absence of taxation. Several of the artists present registered complaints about the shortage of paper and other supplies from the Soviet Union.

After the meeting, the delegation came upon a demonstration of non-Estonians in favor of Estonian independence. Spokesmen of the group expressed a strong dislike for the policies of Gorbachev and were critical of the Bush Administration's response the Baltic independence "crisis."

In the afternoon, the delegation met with Estonian Popular Front representatives

Marju Lauristin, Peet Kask, Ulo Kaevets and Mati Heidmets.

Ms. Lauristin opened the discussion with a brief synopsis of the activities of the Estonian Popular Front (EPF) since its inception in late 1987. She explained that at the beginning activism in the EPF grew rapidly, but now, largely due to the successful EPF drive to break the Communist Party monopoly, the Front itself has fractionalized into several political parties.

Two years ago, many EPF activists felt that things were moving too slowly. Now most agree that a declaration is not as important as building a society that can function independently. The EPF's main goal at this point is to get the issue of Baltic independence on the international agenda, in particular through CSCE (the EPF will send delegates to the Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimension).

Contact has already been established with Boris Yeltsin, the newly elected President of the Russian Republic. Yeltsin has expressed a readiness to establish strong bilateral relationships with each of the Baltic states. Ms. Lauristin met with Yeltsin shortly after his election to begin establishing these ties. While she admitted that she had not pressed him on the subject of Estonia's independence, and declined to predict what measures the RSFSR Supreme Soviet might adopt on Estonia's behalf, she noted that Yeltsin understands that the status quo cannot be continued. "We have begun dismantling the empire," she remarked, "The question now is how best to manage its dissolution. If Russia wins its sovereignty, Moscow and the army are all that will remain of the Soviet Union."

In response to Senator DeConcini's queries about holding a referendum, Mr. Heidmets said that only citizens of the pre-war Republic of Estonia and their descendants should take part in a referendum on independence.[2] Then there could be a second referendum on actual constitutional changes in which all those living in Estonia could take part. He maintained that this is not discriminatory and that in general there is no history of Estonian-Russian hatred; there is only a deep hatred for the policy of occupiers.

Marju Lauristin added that a referendum on independence would have less of a chance of succeeding in Estonia than in Latvia, in spite of the superficially more advantageous population ratio in Estonia (60/40 as opposed to 50/50 in Latvia). She said that polls demonstrated that, although the number is growing, only 26% of the non-Estonian population supports independence, while almost half of the same group in Latvia and Lithuania does. Ms. Lauristin estimated that more than 50% of the non-Estonian population in Estonia is connected with the military or the military industry which is directly controlled by Moscow. This cut of the population includes soldiers, retired officers, employees of all-Union factories loyal to Moscow, and their families.

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[2]The 1945 population was 93% Estonian; in 1990 it is only 60% Estonian.

Ms. Lauristin said that a referendum on joining the Soviet Union would be acceptable if all but the military voted, and that any referendum must have international guarantees of the neutrality of the army.

Ms. Lauristin also brought up some key and as yet unanswered questions associated with force reduction in the Baltics:

- What security system will the Estonians adopt? [a home guard is already forming]

- Can Gorbachev afford to relinquish a well-established infrastructure? [it's doubtful that he would]

- If forces are reduced, where will they go? [Ms. Lauristin suggested that most enlisted men could return to family collectives, but officers have nowhere to return to. Retired officers and families prefer Estonian living conditions. One of the largest categories of emigration applications are former Soviet officers - because of this and other unilateral force withdrawals associated with continuing economic collapse. they are losing their prestigious position and have nowhere in the USSR to go]

- What will be the nuclear weapons arrangement? Who will control any that remain in the Baltic region and who would control them if the USSR were completely decentralized?

- What happens to the internal control mechanism of the USSR if the republics become independent? Is there a national leadership and what authority does/would it have? Will republics electively transfer some authority to manage the union to a central government? If so, what will be the new relational power structure?

On the role of the West, Mr. Kaevets stressed that the need to understand the special status of the Baltic states as occupied states. He also said that the West, in encouraging Mr. Gorbachev, should be supporting democratization and not preservation of the empire.

Before lunch, the delegation visited the Old Town Hall by Hardo Aasmae, Mayor of Tallinn. During a brief welcome, Mr. Aasmae said that throughout history, it has been difficult to change the mind of an Estonian convinced of something. In the present situation, he went on, the people of Estonia are ready to accept new ideas, but they will not stop short of their goal of independence.

Following a tour of the Town Hall, the Mayor hosted the delegation for a luncheon at the "Gloria" restaurant.

The first meeting of the afternoon was with Professor Endel Lippmaa, a scientist who was elected to both the USSR Congress of People's Deputies and the USSR Supreme Soviet. Mr. Lippmaa is well respected for never having joined the Communist Party, and was elected to the Congress of Estonia in March of this year. After the conclusion of the Congress' first session, Professor Lippmaa carried to Moscow the demands of the Congress that Moscow end its illegal annexation of Estonia.

Professor Lippmaa began the meeting by informing Senator DeConcini that (according to fax transmission) the trade agreement had been signed by Gorbachev and Bush in Washington. Lippmaa also reported that during the course of his visit to Washington, Gorbachev continued to threaten Lithuania with further economic sanctions and Presidential Council member Yevgeny Primakov, referring to China's newly granted MFN status, asked whether the Soviets need to impose presidential rule and fire a few rounds in the Baltic states in order to get the same treatment.

Asked by Senator DeConcini to describe the situation in Estonia, Professor Lippmaa explained that the Estonian Parliament's March 30 declaration makes the Soviet Constitution illegal and that makes the only legal constitution that of the Republic of Estonia (ratified in 1938). The current transition period to full independence will end in the formation of new constitutional institutions; the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Estonia will both dissolve themselves, and new elections will take place to a restructured, single, and absolutely representative parliamentary body.

The Congress of Estonia

Professor Lippmaa described the Congress of Estonia as "the hope of many simple Estonians," and said that it would be a mistake to try to make the Congress a "law-making body." Lippmaa strongly advised the Congress against "passing laws" or calling itself a parliament as such a move has no basis in the 1938 Estonian Constitution, which the Congress claims to respect. At their second meeting, when Lippmaa was not present, the Congress went against his advice and declared that it has the authority to adopt provisional legislation during the period of transition to full independence. Lippmaa expressed deep concern over this break in legal continuity, adding that any laws passed by the Congress cannot be enforced as the Congress has only moral authority and not any real power. This move, he fears, will compromise the Congress in the eyes of the people.

U.S. Policy on the Baltic States

Senator DeConcini asked Professor Lippmaa for his opinion on Senator Moynihan's initiative on sending the matter of Lithuanian self-determination to the International Court of Justice. Lippmaa responded that this well-meant gesture really is an insult. The Baltic peoples' right to self-determination is not a disputable issue, and certainly never came up for any of the other countries occupied during World War II. He added that pursuing this

line was a contradiction to the U.S. non-recognition policy.

Professor Lippmaa described U.S. eagerness to shore up Gorbachev as "horse-racing politics," where all the bets are on an individual. Along those lines, he asked why Gorbachev would accept negotiations with the Baltic governments when he's getting everything he wants from the West already.

Yeltsin

Professor Lippmaa said that Yeltsin is well understood by the Russian people and popular for that reason. Yeltsin is helping promote a Russian awakening, but this is different from the dangerous Russian nationalism that the central authorities are stirring up.

Following the meeting with Lippmaa, delegation members met with several Canadians, an American and an Australian working in Tallinn with the Congress of Estonia. The discussion centered on relations between the Supreme Council and the Congress of Estonia and between Estonians and non-Estonians.

Outreach to non-Estonians

The Congress representatives reported that groups comprised of members of both the Estonian Supreme Council and the Congress of Estonia had undertaken an outreach effort to communicate with the non-Estonian population (especially in the northeast region of the country, where some cities are 99% non-Estonian). Their goal is to convince the sizable minority that there is nothing to fear in an independent Estonia -- in fact, there is a lot to gain. Both parliaments are committed to accepting and integrating all minorities and guaranteeing their rights.

Relations Between the Congress of Estonia and the Supreme Council

The parliaments disagree on some questions of procedure. For instance, the Congress of Estonia representatives saw the May 8 Supreme Council's law ridding Estonia of state symbolism as a hollow gesture. They emphasize that Estonia remains occupied and that the symbols of free Estonian statehood should not be displayed until Estonia is really free.

The Role of the West

Asked what they thought the West could do, this group responded that short of diplomatic recognition, it is most important to recognize the Baltic states as occupied countries. Practically speaking, they hope that the West will enter into economic agreements and other new relationships with each of the Baltic states. The imminent reunification of Germany, they point out, proves there is no statute of limitations on World War II issues.

One member of the group also deplored the Western use of language -- particularly in the press -- when referring to the Baltic states. Terms such as "the breakaway republics," "separatists," and even "nationalists" imply that the Baltic states have been legitimate parts of the Soviet Union and are now simply causing trouble.

On Saturday evening, Senator DeConcini met with **Janis Jurkans**, the Latvian Foreign Minister, and **Arunas Degutis**, member of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lithuanian Supreme Council.

Latvia

Latvian Foreign Minister Jurkans admitted that the goal of the Latvian Government to build a democratic state will take time. Practically speaking, this means transferring enterprises in Latvia -- 85% of which are currently run by Moscow -- to Latvian control. It is also essential that the people of Latvia be well educated and prepared for independence. On the other hand, economic and ecological problems are deteriorating so badly that decisions about independence cannot be delayed much longer.

Moscow has not yet overtly imposed sanctions on Latvia, but trade and banking have become more difficult as these are largely under Moscow's control. Persistent shortages have forced the Government to ration gasoline beginning on June 1.

Jurkans offered a cautious assessment of Yeltsin's role in resolving the Baltic crisis. Yeltsin has said that he wants to do business with the Baltic states and that historic truth must be restored, but Jurkans pointed out that, as President of the RSFSR, Yeltsin's first priority is taking care of Russia.

As the Latvian Government is not in full control of the situation (still a lot of troops, KGB, etc.), Jurkans believes that Western recognition of Baltic independence would be dangerous. If, once this recognition was granted, Soviet troops were to come in, the Baltic states would lose their de jure status.

Lithuania

Lithuanian Supreme Council member Arunas Degutis offered a more optimistic view of Yeltsin, whose election, he said, changes the political landscape of the USSR. "Gorbachev is now only one of the players in the political game," he said. Contrasting the motivations of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Degutis described Gorbachev's goal as trying to liberalize and democratize the Soviet Union in order to preserve the empire while Yeltsin is simply trying to preserve Russia.

Degutis reported that the Lithuanians have established contacts all over the USSR and have been ensured economic support (assuming supplies will be allowed to pass through the border). He also passed Senator DeConcini a list of medical supplies that are severely lacking in Lithuania due to Moscow's continuing blockade.

Degutis said that he had spoken with Lithuanian President Landsbergis on June 3 and that the latter had expressed disappointment with the signing of the trade agreement at the Bush-Gorbachev summit. Landsbergis apparently sent a letter to that effect to President Bush. Senator DeConcini joined in this disappointment, and pointed out that the Senate had, on May 1, overwhelmingly adopted a resolution urging President Bush not to submit to Congress legislation giving trade benefits to the Soviet Union until it lifts it economic embargo against Lithuania and begins negotiations with the Lithuanian Government.

In the evening, Senator DeConcini hosted a dinner at the Palace Hotel, an Estonian-Finnish joint venture operation in central Tallinn. Guests included leaders of the Estonian Popular Front, deputies in the Estonian Supreme Council, representatives of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, artists, journalists and promoters of international exchange.

Sunday June 3, 1990

At noon, Senator DeConcini participated in the inauguration of the Estonian-American Chamber of Commerce, housed in the former U.S. Consulate building. Also involved in the ceremony were **Edgar Savisaar**, Prime Minister of Estonia, **Peeter Tammoja**, President of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and **Jenik Radon**, a New York lawyer and businessman.

Prime Minister Savisaar began the ceremony by calling it a milestone in the restoration of US-Estonian relations. He recalled that the U.S. granted Estonia Most Favored Nation status in August 1925 and soon after, the two countries concluded an extensive treaty of friendship, commerce and consular exchange.

Estonia's emerging economic policy, Savisaar went on, will overhaul ownership, guarantee a national economy and switch to a market economy through extensive reform. The Estonian Chamber of Commerce will play a considerable role in arranging for new types of economic activity.

Mr. Savisaar also reiterated that the question of Baltic independence is not a human rights issue for other countries to debate without Baltic representation; it is a regional conflict involving three countries and an occupying power. The Baltic states need support and assistance in getting negotiations started, and there must also be lasting international guarantees of independence.

Following is the text of Senator DeConcini's remarks at the inauguration:

Prime Minister and distinguished guests, we are here today to celebrate the opening of the Estonian-American Chamber of Commerce -- a private initiative dedicated to the development of closer trade relations between the people of our two countries.

I support this effort for two reasons: first, because I believe Estonia and the United States have much to offer one another in the area of expanded trade relations. In the few days I have been here, the industriousness and entrepreneurial spirit of Estonians has become clearly apparent.

Secondly, as United States Senator and Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I am committed to the underlying philosophy of the Helsinki Accords -- respect for and protection of the world's most precious commodity -- the individual human spirit. It is this principle which must be the driving force behind any government.

Each of us must be free to develop our own strengths and talents in our own way. Your efforts here today represent an avenue which allows the individual to pursue his or her entrepreneurial energies in a manner which should only be limited by one's imagination.

During my brief stay in Estonia, I have met with government officials, business people, political activists and artists. I will leave Estonia more firmly convinced than ever that Estonia is blessed with an abundance of talent, energy and courage. And, as the Mayor of Tallinn informed us yesterday, the Estonians are a people whose determination cannot be swayed.

I pledge my continuing support as you pursue your rightful goal of full independent statehood. The U.S. will not forsake your cause and recognizes the sacrifice the people of Estonia have made for democracy.

After the inauguration, Senator DeConcini hosted a luncheon in a downtown restaurant. The guests of honor were **Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar** and **Marju Lauristin.**

In the afternoon, the delegation met with representatives of the two major anti-independence groups. In attendance were **Vladimir Lebedev** of the Joint Council of Labor Collectives, and **Alexei Zybin** of Interfront. Both men are deputies in the Estonian Supreme Council.

Senator DeConcini opened the meeting with an assurance that he is interested in human rights, minority rights and the current situation in the Baltic states. He welcomed the positive changes that have taken place with Gorbachev's encouragement, and praised the Soviet leader for his efforts at democratization. But, he added, historical truth must win out in the Baltic states, and the renewed political process demonstrated during the

recent elections must continue.

Alleged Discrimination

Messrs. Lebedev and Zybin recounted instances of alleged discrimination against ethnic Russians on the part of the Estonian Government. These included the new language law, district gerrymandering and a residence requirement for candidates to the Estonian Supreme Soviet elections in March, and discrimination in education. They also complained about the Government's treatment of anti-independence groups: the bank account of the Joint Council of Labor Collectives (OSTK) was frozen and activities were banned without legal foundation[3], and Interfront was refused official registration without explanation for two years. Mr. Zybin also expressed concern about the formation of an Estonian "Home Guard" and its potential to discriminate against non-Estonians.

The Events of May 15 and the Estonian-USSR Relationship

Senator DeConcini asked about the "coincidental" events of May 15, when anti-independence groups in Estonia and Latvia engaged in angry demonstrations outside their respective Supreme Council buildings. He mentioned meeting pro-independence Russians on Saturday, noting the clear division among non-Estonians over the independence question.

Mr. Lebedev replied that the events of May 15 were not, as the Senator had implied, orchestrated by Moscow; in fact his organization does not count on any support or interference from the central Soviet authorities. Rather there is coordination among the three Baltic anti-independence movements, just as there is coordination among the popular fronts of all three republics.

Lebedev admitted that he would prefer it if Estonia maintained "some kind of union relationship" with the Soviet Union, although he said that if a referendum were held and a plurality voted for independence, he would abide by the will of the majority. Questions of sovereignty, he added, cannot be resolved by considering the wishes of only one country. The Estonian Supreme Council's recent claims to Russian territories demonstrate that the question of Estonian independence cannot be resolved unilaterally. Additionally, there are people who do not wish to sever their ties with Russia and do not want to emigrate. If necessary, the Russian minority will use its control of factories, communications, transport and construction to make the Estonian majority takes its opinion seriously.

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[3]On May 16, the day after anti-independence demonstrators stormed the grounds of the Estonian Supreme Council, the Estonian Government announced a temporary ban on political strikes and on the activities of the OSTK.

Self-Determination

While he upholds the right of peoples to self-determination, Lebedev asserts that the only legitimate method is a referendum -- not parliamentary actions or "discussions on the street." He maintained that most Estonians do not want to completely dissociate themselves from the Soviet Union because they understand the importance of the Soviet market to their economic well-being. He also said that the OSTK bloc in the Supreme Council had proposed passage of a republic law on referendums, but the proposal had been scotched by the Popular Front.

Without discounting the rationale for a referendum, Senator DeConcini responded that negotiations would, for instance, prohibit infringement on territories in Russia, whereas a referendum could risk this land. The Helsinki Accords guarantee territorial boundaries, ensuring that negotiations are the best route to resolution.

Lebedev stressed the importance of minority considerations in any negotiations that might take place. Senator DeConcini made clear that human rights is a two-way street and a watchful eye will be kept on all such negotiations to ensure that all interests are taken into account and that all discrimination is treated and rectified.

After a brief press conference with correspondents from various Estonian media, the delegation attended a dinner hosted by approximately 30 deputies of the Estonian Supreme Council. Senator DeConcini sat at the head table with **Ulo Nugis**, Speaker of the Supreme Council, and his two deputies, **Marju Lauristin** and **Victor Andreev.**

On Monday morning, Marju Lauristin gave the delegation a brief tour of the seat of the Estonian Supreme Council, after which the group met with **Arnold Ruutel**, President of the Estonian Supreme Council.

President Ruutel, who had just returned from meetings with the Swedish Government in Stockholm, began the discussion by stating the fundamental component of the current mood in Estonia: the Soviets have imposed their system on Estonia for the last 50 years, and this state of affairs is no longer acceptable.

Senator DeConcini explained that he had come to Estonia to gain a better understanding of the Baltic drive for independence, and that his belief is now firm that history justifies this process. The Senator mentioned his meeting with members of the non-Estonian minority and stressed the importance of guaranteeing the rights of all peoples in Estonia as the country evolves.

A Justified Process

President Ruutel responded by defending his government against various charges of discrimination. With respect to the language law, for example, he maintained that it is not unreasonable to expect bosses of enterprises to be conversant in Estonian. Virtually all Estonians speak Russian, and yet they have preserved their culture over the years.

Ruutel pointed out that under Soviet rule, almost all official and important positions were automatically given to Russians and that tens of thousands of Estonians were shot to make room for Soviet power. In 1940, the population of Estonia was 1,000,000 and since then some 7,000,000 have "passed through," repopulating the country in a directed process that constitutes a crime against humanity. Additionally, in 1938-1939, before the Soviet occupation, Estonia's economy resembled that of Finland. Fifty years later, the two are like different planets. The processes underway now are therefore wholly natural and justified. And, the President asserted, the rights of minorities are guaranteed under a law passed last year in the Supreme Soviet.

The Baltic Council

Asked by the Senator what his hopes were for resolving differences with Moscow in the near future, President Ruutel responded that he had been meeting with the Lithuanian and Latvian Presidents and this "Baltic Council" had just formally requested a meeting with Gorbachev. Less than three weeks before, Gorbachev had refused to engage in dialogue with any of the Baltic presidents, but Ruutel was nevertheless hopeful, adding that if Gorbachev should again refuse to meet with them, the Baltic Council would appeal for international help.

The Role of the West

To Senator DeConcini's questions about the role of the West, President Ruutel responded that the Baltic Council's meetings with the Swedish Prime Minister had aided in influencing Soviet attitudes towards the Baltic states. Ruutel hopes that similar meetings will take place between U.S. and Baltic top officials in the near future.

Senator DeConcini shared in this hope, remarking that Lithuanian Prime Minister Prunskiene had made an impressive case for the Baltic states during her recent visit to the United States. The Senator also explained that Baltic representatives will have to make the case for CSCE participation in Copenhagen, and that, contrary to their understanding, no invitations would be forthcoming merely because of the Baltic leaders' general appeal to the CSCE states.

On a brief stopover in Helsinki en route to Washington, Senator DeConcini gave a brief press conference on his trip to Estonia, stressing his renewed firm conviction that the U.S. must maintain a principled policy towards the Baltic states -- one that is based on and consistent with the 50-year old policy of non-recognition of the Soviet incorporation of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.